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us at the dépôt on Cooper Creek. If I had known that there was to have been a dépôt there, I would have gladly gone to it from the Thomson River. Now I intend proceeding down the river to Menindie, where I purpose, if necessary, to take the most advisable mode of letting Mr. Howitt know of our return from the Gulf of Carpentaria.

There is a camel on this run, which I will endeavour to get and take to Menindie.

Mr. Bourne, who is a good bushman and a good judge of country, has read this letter, and does not think that I have given a too favourable account of the country along our route from the Gulf of Carpentaria.

3. *Extract of a Letter from JOHN KENT, Esq., to Sir RODERICK MURCHISON, dated Brisbane, Queensland, 17th August, 1862.*

I HAVE sent two tracings, showing Mr. F. Walker's route from the head of the Barcoo to the Gulf of Carpentaria; and as it is the first reliable information given of this portion of the north-eastern interior of New Holland, will prove interesting. It shows conclusively that it is not "all barren from Dan to Beersheba," and proves that if the interior be regarded as a plain, that its greatest elevation would be found at its north-eastern angle. The tropical rains must send down large quantities of water during the north-west monsoon from the nucleus on the granitic range in  $19^{\circ}$  S.,  $144^{\circ}$  E.; and so long as the interior preserves the character of an elevated table-land, the streams would be perennial. I think there can now be little difficulty in explaining the water-worn appearances on Sturt's desert.

The recent explorations of Burke and Walker prove that between the meridian  $138^{\circ}$ , to the eastern coast, and south to the Barcoo, is included the most valuable portion of the interior of Australia. For its development, the immigration of Indian coolie labour is essential, and this object will be promoted by establishing a steam-route to Singapore (linking on with the Calcutta and Ceylon line) through Torres Straits; and as the attention of the great cotton interests of Manchester and Paisley is now directed to Queensland, it is much to be desired that they will forward the views of a company recently formed here for placing a line of steamers on that route.

The discovery of auriferous fields near Gladstone, and the Peakdowns of Leichhardt, show that the riches of the Australian Cordilleras are not confined to the southern and central portion; while the recently proved existence of many thousands of red oxide of copper on the surface, near the latter locality, indicate the extent of our mineral wealth.

I have lately drawn the attention of the Rev. W. B. Clarke to the fact that the eastern coast of New Holland is rising at the rate, say, of an inch per annum, as ascertained by the height of rocks in the Brisbane, above tide-levels, through a period of twenty years; and he assures me that to the south the same result has been inferred, though the observations have not extended through so long a period.

4. *Partial Ascent of Um Shaumur in the Peninsula of Sinai in 1857.* By the Rev. FREDERICK HOWLETT.

MR. HOWLETT has communicated to the Society a coloured sketch of Um Shaumur, taken on the occasion of an attempted ascent to its highest peak. The following are the particulars of the route taken by his party. They left the Convent of St. Catherine's on camel-back at 8<sup>45</sup> A.M., April 30, 1857, and, passing through the Wadys Sebayah, Rotik and Rufferab, gained the top

of Nubk Jebel at 12:20, and obtained the first view of Um Shaumur in 25m. later. At 1:30 they rested for an hour, at a good spring under a rock in the Wady Râhabah, 300 yards west of the track, and reached an excellent watering-place in a rocky glen, called Wady Ghadu, at 4:55. The next morning they started at 4:55 A.M., and, delaying an hour for breakfast, descended to the ruined convent of Tiwahat el Deir at 9:15. Thence they attempted the ascent, and reached the small central peak; but were checked by a rock that blocked the only access in attempting the main summit. They returned, and finally reached their former bivouac in the Wady Râhabeh at 6 P.M.; and seven hours' travel in the morning of the next day brought the main body of the party back to St Catherine's.

There was a good sprinkling of aromatic herbs on the mountain, but no fennel was observed to justify the presumed derivation of the word Um Shaumur (Mother of Fennel); neither were any of the mysterious sounds heard, which are said to be of frequent occurrence in its neighbourhood. As regards the hypothesis once entertained of Um Shaumur being the Mountain of the Law, Mr. Howlett states there did not appear to be an acre of ground anywhere near Um Shaumur fit for the purposes of an encampment.

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#### 5. *The Alps of Dauphiné.* By F. F. TUCKETT, Esq., F.R.G.S.\*

FEW portions of the mountain system of Europe have been less thoroughly explored than the lofty group of peaks included between the rivers Durance, Drac, and Romanche, and occupying portions of the ancient province of Dauphiné,—the modern departments of the Isère and Hautes Alpes. The area of the entire massif may be roughly computed at about 1100 square miles; but the glacier-developing portion to which the accompanying map is confined, covers little more than half this surface. The mean elevation is very considerable, as the following statements and the general narrowness of the valleys would indicate:—4 peaks above 13,000 and under 14,000 feet; 17 peaks above 12,000 and under 13,000 feet; 29 peaks above 11,000 and under 12,000 feet. Its glaciers (primary and secondary) exceed 100; and under this head, as well as in the height and number of its summits, it may almost challenge comparison with the system of the Finsteraarhorn, though, as respects glaciers, the latter has certainly the advantage in size from the greater extent of *névé*, a result of its less precipitous formation.

From time to time notices of its topography and physical features have appeared, and the writings of Ladoucette, M. Élie de Beaumont, Professor Lory, and our own countryman, Principal Forbes, have called attention to many of its more striking peculiarities. Within the last four or five years various members of the Alpine Club have penetrated still further into its recesses, and a series of papers in the second series of 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers' give evidence of their activity and enterprise. Up to the present time, however, the absence of any reliable map, added to the really intricate relations of the principal summits and valleys, and the fact that few of the explorers had an opportunity of intersecting the district in various directions and studying it in detail, have rendered it difficult to arrive at a clear conception of the mutual relation of its parts.

Under these circumstances I ventured to think that a fresh examination by one who could avail himself of the labours of his predecessors would supply some desiderata, and I therefore devoted ten or twelve days of last July to this

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\* A photographic reduction of the unpublished M.S. map of Dauphiné, by the Dépôt de la Guerre, has been presented by Mr. Tuckett to the Society. His routes and corrections are marked upon it.